

**RELATIONSHIPS AMONGST EXTENDED INTERNAL MARKETING VARIABLES,
BRAND RECOGNITION AND BRAND RECALL IN SERVICE ORGANISATIONS: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

This comparative study examined relationships among the extended internal marketing mix elements and brand recognition and recall in two South African service organisations. The internal marketing mix elements used to determine their influence on brand recognition and recall as perceived by customers of car rental companies and stakeholders of the Council for Medical Schemes (CMS), consisted of people, process, positioning and performance, while brand recall referred to trustworthiness, overall evaluation and loyalty. Structural equation modelling was used to analyse the data. The findings of the study indicated that process and performance are critical for car rental customers to recognise and recall the brand, compared to CMS stakeholders who perceived people, positioning and performance as important for recognising the brand and building trustworthy and loyal relationships. Hence, irrespective of the type of service organisation, the successful implementation of internal marketing programmes is essential to enhance the brand recognition and recall of these organisations.

Keywords: Service organisations, Internal marketing, Brand recognition, Brand recall.

INTRODUCTION

Service organisations across all industries, including car rental companies and even regulators such as the Council for Medical Schemes (CMS), regulating medical aids, administrators and managed care organisations in South Africa, understand the importance of high quality service delivery levels when wanting to secure a competitive advantage. Services refer to deeds actions of employees, processes, encompassing the two way flow of information between employees and customers, and experiences, which are created by performances of employees during their interaction with customers (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2016; Kasper, Van Helsdingen & Gabbott, 2006). For car rental companies and the CMS to implement new improved service quality strategies successfully, it is required to align employees' attitudes to the vision and goals of these organisations (Huang & Chen, 2013; Matanda & Ndubisi, 2013). Internal marketing elements, such as people, process, positioning and performance, promote the formation of an organisational culture and corporate identity or collective mind, which enhance brand recognition and recall of the organisation (Keelson, 2014; Ahmed, Rafiq & Saad, 2003). The organisational culture assists individuals in understanding the different functions of an organisation and therefore provide them with norms for acceptable performance (Conduit, Matanda & Mavondo, 2014). As such, internal marketing is useful in developing and maintaining a customer-oriented organisation, ultimately enhancing the brand (Gummesson, Lusch & Vargo, 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The management of the marketing mix constitutes a unique process of exchange between the organisation and its employees (people), with the challenge of seeking a balance between their performances, so that the employee is satisfied with the internal exchanges and can deliver better service to the external customer (Ferdous, Herington and Merilees, 2015). Cassundé, Cassundé Junior, de Farias & de Mendonça (2014) argue that internal marketing is an effort, which was planned and directed at employees to motivate them to implement and integrate organisational strategies that are aimed at orientation of customers, by using a marketing-like approach.

As stated by Angelis, De Lima & Siraliova (2010), in creating value for customers, organisations have to attract, develop, motivate and retain employees who are capable of delivering service excellence if their aim is to achieve success. Namjoyan, Esfahani and Haery (2013) agree and state that through such an approach employees perceive themselves as inclusive to a team that is adding both internal and external value to the organisation. Employees who have a feeling of belonging are more satisfied and tend to deliver high quality service to external customers, which

could eventually lead to brand loyalty. It is therefore important for an organisation to have systems in place that will empower employees to improve on their overall service delivery levels. It is the reliability of employee service delivery levels as well as customer perception of such service delivery that influence customer perception of the organisational brand.

Another way in which organisations establish a distinct and valued place in their customers' minds is to design their products/services and brand to create a desired position in the market place (Martinez, Bastl, Kingston & Evans, 2010). This desired positioning of the organisation is articulated by the relevant employee segment, as well as the benefits offered by the organisation. Angelis et al. (2010) argue that the position the organisation achieves is determined by the way in which employees interact with internal and external customers. The organisation's positioning is also dependent on the particular services and products offered by the organisation (Blankson, Kalafatis, Coffie & Tsogas, 2014). It is furthermore critical for an organisation to succeed in positioning itself as identified by its goals, since only then it will be possible to reach the desired positioning in the external market place (Foster, Punjaisri & Cheng, 2010; Palmer, 2005). However, an organisation that is serious in positioning itself optimally both internally and in the external market place, is also taking into consideration the actual performance of the organisation (Lings & Greenley, 2009).

In many service industries success increasingly depends on the organisation's capacity to learn about new developments and to improve resources available. The key to achieving better performance lies in the ability of the organisation to change when the environment demands it (Prouska, Psychogios & Rexhepi, 2016; Mieres, Sánchez & Vijande, 2012). At the same time, employees' performance should be in line with the strategic goals of the organisation (Kale & Sangita, 2014). Therefore an increased organisational understanding of internal marketing and its link to brand recall is important to secure and sustain a competitive advantage.

PROBLEM INVESTIGATED

As far as can be ascertained, no comparison studies of the perceived influence of the internal marketing elements people, process and performance, on brand recognition and recall within a car rental company and medical scheme environment has been reported before from a South African perspective. To address this research gap, this comparison study wants to inform services industries that an effective implementation of the internal marketing mix ultimately results in a positive recognition and recall of the brand of the organisation. Considering this, it is important that all employees of car rental companies and the CMS recognise the impact of their

performance on external stakeholders (Conduit et al., 2014). Therefore, the creation of external customer value through internal marketing is essential for a favourable brand recognition, a positive overall evaluation of the organisation and the subsequent development of long-term customer relationships, which will lead to loyal customers and higher profit margins benefiting employees, external customers and the organisation as a whole (Lee, Yim, Jones and Kim, 2016). Ultimately, the organisation will be regarded as trustworthy (Cassunde et al., 2014; Monk & Ryding, 2007).

Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and findings in the literature, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H₁: The influence of people, process, positioning and performance on brand recognition as perceived by car rental companies' customers is positive. This hypothesis is further refined as follows:

H₁(a): People have a positive influence on the brand recognition of car rental companies' customers.

H₁(b): Process has a positive influence on the brand recognition of car rental companies' customers.

H₁(c): Positioning has a positive influence on the brand recognition of car rental companies' customers.

H₁(d): Performance has a positive influence on the brand recognition of car rental companies' customers.

H₂: The influence of people, process, positioning and performance on trustworthiness as perceived by car rental companies' customers is positive. This hypothesis is further refined as follows:

H₂(a): People have a positive influence on trustworthiness of car rental companies' customers.

H₂(b): Process has a positive influence on trustworthiness of car rental companies' customers.

H₂(c): Positioning has a positive influence on trustworthiness of car rental companies' customers.

H₂(d): Performance has a positive influence on trustworthiness of car rental companies' customers.

H₃: The influence of people, process, positioning and performance on overall evaluation as perceived by car rental companies' customers is positive. This hypothesis is further refined as follows:

- H3(a): People have a positive influence on overall evaluation of car rental companies' customers.
 - H3(b): Process has a positive influence on overall evaluation of car rental companies' customers.
 - H3(c): Positioning has a positive influence on overall evaluation of car rental companies' customers.
 - H3(d): Performance has a positive influence on overall evaluation of car rental companies' customers.
- H4: The influence of people, process, positioning and performance on loyalty as perceived by car rental companies' customers is positive. This hypothesis is further refined as follows:
- H4(a): People have a positive influence on loyalty of car rental companies' customers.
 - H4(b): Process has a positive influence on loyalty of car rental companies' customers.
 - H4(c): Positioning has a positive influence on loyalty of car rental companies' customers.
 - H4(d): Performance has a positive influence on loyalty of car rental companies' customers.
- H5: The influence of people, process, positioning and performance on brand recognition as perceived by CMS stakeholders is positive. This hypothesis is further refined as follows:
- H5(a): People have a positive influence on the brand recognition of CMS stakeholders.
 - H5(b): Process has a positive influence on the brand recognition of CMS stakeholders.
 - H5(c): Positioning has a positive influence on the brand recognition of CMS stakeholders.
 - H5(d): Performance has a positive influence on the brand recognition of CMS stakeholders.
- H6: The influence of people, process, positioning and performance on trustworthiness as perceived by CMS stakeholders is positive. This hypothesis is further refined as follows:
- H6(a): People have a positive influence on trustworthiness of CMS stakeholders.
 - H6(b): Process has a positive influence on trustworthiness of CMS stakeholders.
 - H6(c): Positioning has a positive influence on trustworthiness of CMS stakeholders.
 - H6(d): Performance has a positive influence on trustworthiness of CMS stakeholders.
- H7: The influence of people, process, positioning and performance on overall evaluation as perceived by CMS stakeholders is positive. This hypothesis is further refined as follows:
- H7(a): People have a positive influence on overall evaluation of CMS stakeholders.
 - H7(b): Process has a positive influence on overall evaluation of CMS stakeholders.
 - H7(c): Positioning has a positive influence on overall evaluation of CMS stakeholders.
 - H7(d): Performance has a positive influence on overall evaluation of CMS stakeholders.

H₈: The influence of people, process, positioning and performance on loyalty as perceived by CMS stakeholders is positive. This hypothesis is further refined as follows:

H_{8(a)}: People have a positive influence on loyalty of CMS stakeholders.

H_{8(b)}: Process has a positive influence on loyalty of CMS stakeholders.

H_{8(c)}: Positioning has a positive influence on loyalty of CMS stakeholders.

H_{8(d)}: Performance has a positive influence on loyalty of CMS stakeholders.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was quantitative and descriptive in nature. The target population was car rental companies in South Africa and the stakeholders of the CMS. Directly proportionate stratified sampling was applied to the study to select external customers from CMS and selected car rental customers. The measurement instrument in the study contained 75 constructs to be analysed, therefore the minimum required sample would be 375, and the maximum 750. A total number of 581 responses from car rental companies and 636 responses from CMS were received, which provided for excellent samples. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to analyse the data for the study.

RESULTS

Profile of respondents

The majority of respondents were in the age category 56 years or older (22% car rental; 30% CMS), followed by respondents between the ages 36 and 45 years (16% car rental; 16.4% CMS). Only 11 (2%) car rental and 6 (0.9%) CMS respondents were between 18 and 25 years old. The majority of respondents were male (69.4% car rental; 58.5% CMS), with the rest being female (30.6% car rental; 41.5% CMS). The highest number of respondents were white (66.7% car rental; 76.1% CMS), followed by blacks (24.3% car rental; 10.2% CMS). The lowest number of car rental respondents, 4 (0.7%) and CMS 15 (2.4%) were “other”, who referred to Middle Eastern.

Measurement model assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis was estimated for all constructs in the models to ensure validity and internal consistency. The constructs for car rental companies were all in accordance with the recommended value of 0.5 or higher, however, OVER1 and LOYAL4 raised concern because they were lower than the range of other scale items within the particular constructs. These items were also highlighted as concern areas in the evaluation of standard residuals and due to high correlations, these two scale items were omitted from further analysis. By implication, these

scale items might have an influence on the goodness-of-fit of the structural model and might jeopardise the validity of the measuring instrument. The same applied to the CMS and items PRF4, BREC4 and OVER1 were removed from the analysis because of low factor loading and validity concerns. The factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha for car rental companies and CMS

Constructs	Items	Factor loadings: Car rental companies	Cronbach's alpha: Car rental companies	Factor loadings: CMS	Cronbach's alpha: CMS
People	PPL1	0,812	0,996	0,826	0,925
	PPL2	0,851		0,857	
	PPL3	0,861		0,889	
	PPL4	0,833		0,876	
	PPL5	0,745		0,732	
Process	PROC1	0,794	0,996	0,878	0,918
	PROC2	0,823		0,734	
	PROC3	0,593		0,791	
	PROC4	0,585		0,905	
	PROC5	0,783		0,853	
Positioning	POS1	0,723	0,996	0,825	0,913
	POS2	0,848		0,833	
	POS3	0,878		0,844	
	POS4	0,803		0,825	
	POS5	0,813		0,791	
Performance	PRF1	0,767	0,995	0,896	0,893
	PRF2	0,849		0,880	
	PRF3	0,823		0,828	
	PRF4	0,507		0,475*	
	PRF5	0,729		0,864	
Brand recognition	BREC1	0,899	0,997	0,873	0,871
	BREC2	0,823		0,873	
	BREC3	0,864		0,779	
	BREC4	0,632		0,505*	
	BREC5	0,754		0,781	
Trustworthiness	TRUST1	0,854	0,998	0,929	0,954
	TRUST2	0,808		0,913	
	TRUST3	0,790		0,906	
	TRUST4	0,813		0,832	
	TRUST5	0,707		0,886	
Overall	OVER1	0,552*	0,997	0,495*	0,788

evaluation	OVER2	0,733		0,592	
	OVER3	0,803		0,826	
	OVER4	0,737		0,710	
	OVER5	0,725		0,633	
Loyalty	LOYAL1	0,895	0,999	0,796	0,877
	LOYAL2	0,908		0,845	
	LOYAL3	0,711		0,700	
	LOYAL4	0,525*		0,880	
	LOYAL5	0,567		0,610	

*Removed from further analysis

All factor loadings vary from 0.7 to 0.9 and are above the cut-off of 0.5, suggesting that the items load very well into the constructs.

Structural equation modelling results

The graphical representation of the models is provided in Figures 1 and 2 respectively.

Figure 1: SEM Model Car rental companies

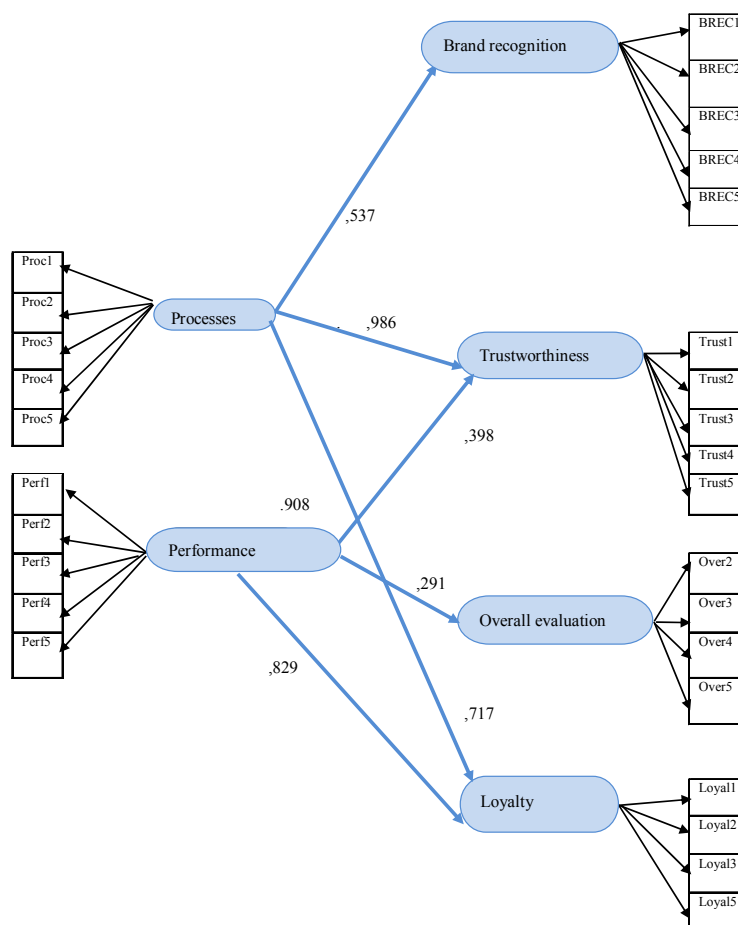


Figure 2: SEM Model CMS

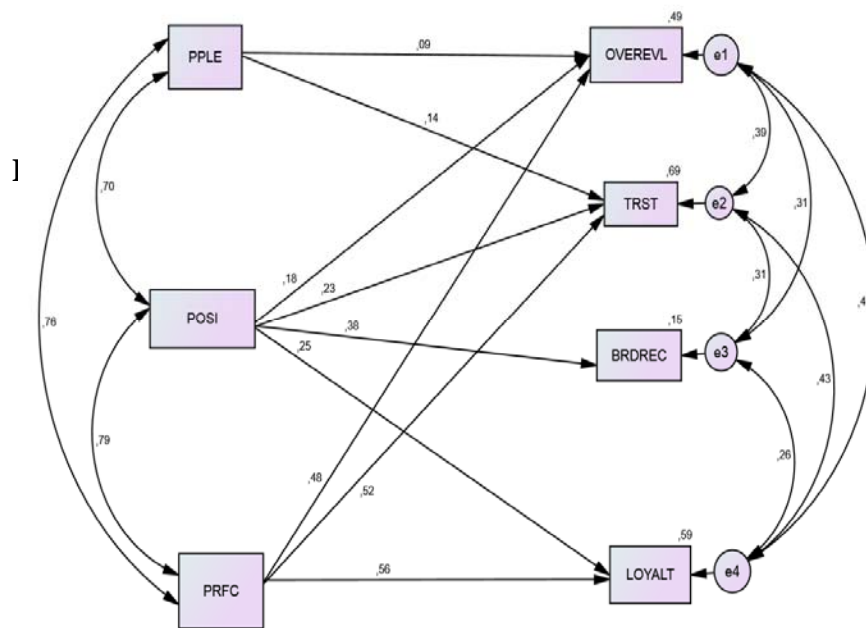


Table 2: R² for the variances and rejected or accepted hypotheses for car rental companies

Variables	R ²	Variance explained	Hypotheses rejected or accepted
Brand recognition	,395	40%	H1(a) rejected H1(b) accepted H1(c) rejected H1(d) rejected
Trustworthiness	,844	84%	H2(a) rejected H2(b) accepted H2(c) rejected H2(d) accepted
Overall evaluation	,630	63%	H3(a) rejected H3(b) accepted H3(c) rejected H3(d) accepted
Loyalty	,670	67%	H4(a) rejected H4(b) accepted H4(c) rejected H4(d) accepted

Table 2 above shows the variations of the constructs, which means the regression findings explain 40% of the dependent construct brand recognition, 84% of the variation of trustworthiness, 63% of overall evaluation and 67% of the variation of loyalty. The accepted and rejected hypotheses are also displayed.

Table 3: R² for the variances and rejected or accepted hypotheses for CMS

Variables	R²	Variance explained	Hypotheses rejected or accepted
Brand recognition	,145	15%	H5(a) rejected H5(b) rejected H5(c) accepted H5(d) rejected
Trustworthiness	,687	69%	H6(a) accepted H6(b) rejected H6(c) accepted H6(d) accepted
Overall evaluation	,493	49%	H7(a) accepted H7(b) rejected H7(c) accepted H7(d) accepted
Loyalty	,587	59%	H8(a) rejected H8(b) rejected H8(c) accepted H8(d) accepted

According to Table 3 above, the model explains 15% of the variation of brand recognition, 69% of the variation of trustworthiness, 49% of overall evaluation and 59% of the variation of loyalty. The accepted and rejected hypotheses are also displayed.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Recommendation 1

In a services environment employees play a critical role because customers and stakeholders base their experiences with the organisation on the encounter they have with employees. Employees spend a substantial part of their lives working in their office, hence it is important to create an office environment that looks as friendly and appealing as possible. A friendly and comfortable atmosphere will encourage employees to go to work every day. New employees could be welcomed by receiving something special on their first day. Induction training

programmes are important to instil the vision and goals of the car rental companies and CMS in the minds of their employees. Further training programmes should be offered to employees to create employees who are knowledgeable and customer-orientated which will lead to improved brand recognition and recall (Conradie, Roberts-Lombard & Klopper, 2013). Knowledgeable employees feel empowered and confident to perform their roles better. Employees, who are allowed to participate in the strategy of the organisation, have a sense of belonging and sometimes very creative ideas develop from their participation.

Marketing strategies should be shared with employees, and values, behaviours and cultures need to be entrenched in employees. Employees who believe in the values and goals of the organisation have more loyalty towards the organisation and are better motivated to provide service excellence. It does not matter how mundane an employee's task is, by motivating, training and encouraging employees they can find meaning in their tasks, can contribute value to the organisation, and can serve a higher purpose, besides earning a salary.

Recommendation 2

To ensure the internal process addresses customer requirements, car rental companies and CMS have to ensure their employees are allowed to be flexible and responsive to customers' needs in order to streamline processes and satisfy customers and stakeholders. The design and implementation of effective processes to ensure a successful interaction between employees and customers are critical. Management plays a key role in influencing employee actions and designing processes that aid in service success. Employees should also be allowed to make recommendations to the process, as they are following the process on a daily basis and can highlight areas where improvement is required.

Customers and stakeholders should also be informed of changes and new products, processes and procedures. If they understand the processes, they will feel more confident and have more trust in the organisation. However, to provide a satisfying experience to the external customer in delivering the service or product, the internal process has to be reliable and must have integrity. Feedback from customers is also very valuable to assess if existing internal processes have a positive effect on the service delivery to customers.

Recommendation 3

Similar to external positioning, internal positioning is at the core of internal marketing programmes because it includes all other marketing mix elements to address predetermined

organisational goals. Therefore, car rental companies and CMS have to focus their positioning strategy on market and competitive analyses, which should be linked to the internal analysis.

Employees should be segmented and relevant training provided to the particular segment to ensure they are correctly positioned. It is only after car rental companies and the CMS have positioned themselves internally, that marketing plans can be developed and implemented to strengthen the position of the organisations externally. Benefits to both employees and customers have to be designed to ensure both internal and external customers and stakeholders agree with the goals and objectives of the organisation. Some initiatives that could be considered for the positioning include deciding which campaign to launch, events to participate in, possible employee rewards, what communication channel should be used, and what resources and budget are required.

Therefore, companies should drive a strategy of internal positioning to brand itself as an employer of choice that displays their caring for employees whereby a good reputation can be built.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of selected extended internal marketing variables, people, process, positioning and performance on brand recognition and the extent to which customers and stakeholders recall the brand of car rental companies and the CMS. The comparison of car rental companies with CMS produced interesting findings. The influence of process and performance on brand recognition, trust, overall evaluation and loyalty of car rental companies confirms the importance of internal process and performance of employees. The significant relationships between positioning and performance of CMS provide insight as to how much stakeholders of CMS rely on the organisation to position itself in the healthcare sector, which requires constant performance to ensure a positive brand recognition and recall.

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